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ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 2 October 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, I have the honour to enclose herewith the Medellín Declaration for Cultural Diversity and Tolerance and the Plan of Action on Cultural Cooperation, adopted by the First Meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Medellín, Colombia on 4 and 5 September 1997.

I would highly appreciate it if the text of the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda items 23, 27, 30, 35, 89, 97, 110 and 112.

(Signed) Julio LONDOÑO PAREDES
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

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ANNEX I

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

Medellín Declaration for Cultural Diversity and Tolerance, adopted by the First Meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Medellín, Colombia, on 4 and 5 September 1997

The Ministers in charge of Culture of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement met in Medellín, Colombia, on September 4 and 5, 1997, to propose actions to promote cultural cooperation among Member States and respect for the cultural diversity and freedom of expression, with due regard to the hopes and aspirations of their peoples, in pursuit of their cultural activities and cultural traditions, and in accomplishing the mandate given by the XI Summit of Heads of State and/or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries.

1. The Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the call made by the Heads of State and/or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries to hold a conference of Ministers of Culture, as a recognition of the importance granted to the subject of culture by the XI Summit that took place in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, between October 18 – 20, 1995.

2. The Ministers agreed that the guiding principles of the Movement continue to be valid because, notwithstanding the end of the Cold War and, consequentially, the end of ideological confrontation, new barriers have emerged between the North and the South. Globalization, unipolarism, and technological gaps, as well as aggression and occupation, threaten and marginalize our cultures and their national character, and jeopardize our survival as sovereign nations.

3. The Ministers acknowledged that the cultural diversity and the plurality of views of the world constitute a major asset to mankind, and provide a contribution for the construction of a new international order. These rich diversities should be considered as opportunities for cooperation and solidarity rather than reasons for dissension.

4. The Ministers emphasized that international cultural relations shall be based on cooperation and not on confrontation. As it emerges from the Final Document of the Cartagena Summit, cooperation is not an option but an imperative, and should be grounded on the acknowledgement and respect of the cultural identity and sovereignty of each State.

5. The Ministers emphasized that the media have an important role to play in the universalization of ideas of tolerance, respect for cultural diversity and the right to cultural development.

6. The Ministers also emphasized the need for objective information and their determination to coordinate the actions by the Non-Aligned Countries in all relevant international fora, in order to combat the disinformation strategies aimed at producing adverse political effects on member countries of NAM and other developing countries.

7. In this context, the Ministers welcomed the outcome of the Fifth Meeting of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries which, inter alia, agreed on the need for intensive research efforts by Non-Aligned Countries in the development of communication technology and cooperation amongst the NAM members as a means of redressing the continued imbalances and inequalities between developed countries and developing countries in the field of information and communication.

8. The Ministers, in keeping with the spirit of the Cartagena Summit, expressed their commitment to take specific actions to strengthen South-South cooperation in the information and communication fields, as well as in other forms of cultural cooperation, including education and training, based on the principle of collective self-reliance.

9. The Ministers also stressed the need to increase technology transfer in the fields of information and communication, and emphasized that the application of procedures to protect intellectual property rights should take into account the needs of developing countries, so as not to adversely affect the financial, commercial, technological and development interests of those countries.

10. The Ministers requested national and international organizations, especially the World Intellectual Property Organization WIPO, and the UNESCO Intergovernmental Commission for Intellectual Property, to continue to work with every greater intensity, on the recognition and defense of community rights and creative folk activities in different cultures, mainly those in developing countries.

11. The Ministers acknowledged that the modern telecommunications know-how, and updated audiovisual and printed information services, should not be employed as means of cultural dominance against the vernacular cultures of the world. Furthermore, they noted that broadcasting content that runs contrary to the cultural and moral values of the developing countries should be discouraged.

12. The Ministers underlined that the actual trend of globalization leads to the loss of identity, and of the sense of community, personal esteem, as well as the sense of belonging to one's own culture. Therefore, the Ministers agreed that equitable and mutually beneficial globalization is the best option by which countries of the South may enrich the cultural heritage of mankind.

13. The Ministers agreed that it is important to preserve and advance the cultural heritage by adhering to national cultural policies, and unite in solidarity against the ideological and cultural infiltration by the developed countries.

14. The Ministers strongly condemned all attempts to undermine the cultural heritage of peoples under foreign occupation and stressed the need for the respect of their cultural values, customs and traditions, as well as the preservation, conservation and protection of their archeological, religious and historical sites.

15. The Ministers expressed their full support for the respect of cultures, which must be based on the principles of international law, international humanitarian law and the United Nations Charter. In this regard, they emphasized the respect for the sovereignty of States and support of people's struggle against colonialism, foreign occupation and usurpation of their legitimate rights.

16. The Ministers took into consideration the UNESCO decisions that deal with the protection of cultural heritage and sites in Jerusalem. They supported those decisions and refused and rejected any attempt to change the historical cultural identity of the Holy City, and emphasized that all these changes are illegal.

17. The Ministers agreed that one of the main objectives of cultural policies in developing countries is to stimulate the underlying creative potential of their people, such as their rich heritage in traditional, scientific and technical knowledge. They also agreed that the greatest challenge faced by the Member States is to develop mechanisms to cooperate in these fields, in order to mutually re-inforce each other, as well as to develop collective self-esteem.

18. The Ministers emphasized the importance of conceiving culture from a broad standpoint, transcending the concept that limits it to fine arts and folklore. They suggested a culture sensitive process of development which will be able to draw on the large resources of creativity and traditional knowledge and skills that are to be found throughout the developing world. They emphasized the importance of culture as one of the integral factors defining the identity of countries.

19. The Ministers highlighted the responsibility of States to guarantee and implement the right to culture as established in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Ministers also stressed the need to preserve and protect the cultural diversity of human kind in all its forms, so that future generations will also be enriched by this inheritance.

20. The Ministers confirmed that cultural embargoes have adverse effects on all aspects of cultural life and on the coming generations, by depriving them opportunities to match the development of cultural life in the world and respond to the needs of cultural development, and call for putting an end on all measures which adversely affect the proceeding of cultural processes in the countries subjected to embargoes.

21. Likewise, the Ministers confirmed the decision adopted by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Movement in New Delhi on April 8, 1997, and the Communiqué issued by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement on June 4, 1997, that rejects the blockade against Cuba, lasting for over 35 years, and the legislative instruments on which it is based, particularly the Helms-Burton law, whose extra-territorial effects, like similar laws such as the D'Amato Act against Iran and Libya, violate the sovereignty and cultural identity of the states affected, and are a genuine proof of the intolerance that impedes the free flow of culture amongst nations.

22. The Ministers expressed, as the Heads of State and Government did, their concern for the new trends to adopt discriminatory practices based on culture, nationality, religion or language, and rejected the contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.

23. The Ministers affirmed the right of migrants to express their culture in host countries, in a way that does not jeopardize or disrespect the culture and religious values of the host country. In this sense, the Ministers urged the proposed forthcoming world conference against racism to be an opportunity to explicitly condemn the practice of discriminating and excluding immigrants because of their culture.

24. The Ministers stressed the need for national institutions, while keeping into consideration the characteristics of each individual State, to be capable of responding to the cultural needs of their people, guaranteeing the full exercise of cultural rights, in perfect harmony with cultural movements, so that their action becomes a

promoter, rather than an obstacle, for development. Likewise, the Ministers expressed the need to formulate long-term policies to generate ambitious cultural projects and avoid discontinuity in cultural processes.

25. The Ministers acknowledged and commented the new perception of the role that women play in culture, in the field of promoting and preserving cultural values and traditions, and called for the adoption of concrete measures to increase the involvement of women in the formulation of cultural policies by the State and society.

26. The Ministers expressed their particular concern over the scarce opportunities provided by society for young people and recommended that they be encouraged to participate in cultural affairs by giving them the necessary basis and participation in decision-making with all due respect for diversity.

27. The Ministers stressed the need to take concrete measures in order to promote good quality and beneficent cultural industries, and facilitate domestic and global distribution of the goods produced by them. They underlined their commitment to strive to set up networks for cultural exchanges of, inter alia, goods, services and information within Member Countries, adopting for such purpose the technical and legal measures that may be necessary.

28. The Ministers deemed it essential to promote and sponsor activities in the fields of education, science, technology and humanities, in their various manifestations and modalities, and highlighted the role that existing intergovernmental organizations, including UNESCO, are called to play in this respect. In the context of the proposed Summit on Culture and Development, the Ministers deemed it crucial that the Non-Aligned Countries should work together and cooperate in the preparation for the Summit, and should present their collective points of view.

29. Likewise, the Ministers supported the cultural integration process initiated in 1989 by the Ministers of Culture of Latin America and the Caribbean, and called on other regions of the Non-Aligned Movement to consider this important experience in order to adopt similar processes of integration, cooperation and reinforcement of their own identities.

30. The Ministers reaffirmed, as it was the case forty years ago, that peace continues to be among the main purposes of the Non-Aligned Movement. In this context, the Ministers highlighted the basic role that culture and tolerance play in every process aimed at the consolidation of peaceful coexistence.

ANNEX II

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

Plan of Action on Cultural Cooperation adopted by the First Meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Medellín, Colombia, on 4 and 5 September 1997

1. The Ministers in charge of Culture agreed that, on the eve of the 21st century, the Movement has a major responsibility to protect and promote respect for cultural diversity and tolerance, as well as to respect the cultural heritage and diversity of its people, through the process of cultural development and cultural cooperation in the quest for peace and integration.

2. To this end, the Ministers undertook to give priority to adopt and implement cultural policies and action plans, in accordance with their own diversity, aimed at guaranteeing full respect of cultural heritage, cultural rights, pluralism, tolerance, free cultural expression and cultural development in the era of globalization.

I. Cultural Heritage and Diversity

3. Noting that cultural heritage and diversity are basic characteristics of peoples, the Ministers recommended that their governments:

i. Consider the preservation, promotion, protection and conservation of the cultural heritage as a guiding principle for the formulation of cultural policies.

ii. Design and implement plans and programs to carry out the inventory, evaluation, dissemination, recovery, maintenance, rehabilitation, preservation and development of the national cultural heritage.

iii. In defending cultural diversity, avoid discriminatory or preferential treatment, as these are detrimental to the principles of equity, except where considered essential for disadvantaged sections of society, in accordance with national legislation.

iv. Promote the integration of the respect to cultural diversity into the functions of international organizations, notably within the United Nations and particularly in the field of human rights.

v. Resort to all available media in order to disseminate information about this diversity and make it known both at the national and international levels, and promote the exchange of information on the compilation, restoration, social use, dissemination and preservation of the cultural heritage of their countries.

vi. Foster multilinguism, inasmuch as it implies the acknowledgement of the right and duty of each country in the world to both make itself understood and understand others.

vii. Highlight the importance of oral traditions of the peoples of the world and draw up programs to document, preserve and respect them.

viii. Promote awareness and facilitate access of the youth to their culture of origin.

ix. Seek to obtain the return of illicitly acquired cultural property of all kinds to their countries of origin, particularly art objects, monuments, museum pieces, archives, manuscripts, documents and any other cultural or artistic treasures. This action will contribute to the strengthening of international cooperation and will allow cultural values, common to developing countries, to be preserved and flourish.

4. The Ministers in charge of Culture expressed concern about the illegal export and trade in antiquities and other items of great cultural value to the countries of origin, including those taken from occupied territories, as such practices destroy the cultural heritage of the developing countries. In that respect, they recommended that their governments:

i. Cooperate by exchanging relevant information in order to prevent illicit export and trade of such important items of cultural value and cultural heritage of Non-Aligned Countries.

ii. Introduce national legislation, aimed at preventing the transit or trade of such items on their territories.

iii. Cooperate in the context of international bodies, such as UNESCO and the United Nations, in order to prevent the illegal export and trading of such items and to facilitate their return to the countries of origin.

5. Noting the importance of music in the national identity and culture of developing countries, and the role it could play in strengthening South-South links, the Ministers invited Member States, artists, producers and the media of developing countries to contribute to the follow-up efforts to produce musical materials, and make these available for television and radio broadcasting, and to the broader public in the South.

II. Education and Tolerance

6. Considering that education and tolerance are essential components of development and cultural diversity, the Ministers agreed on the need to:

i. Reinforce the principles of cultural diversity in education programmes.

ii. Adopt and implement cultural and educational policies that link the educational systems with the social and cultural settings, based on specific programmes related to the culture of each people.

iii. Adopt and implement policies by which educational systems promote the principles of respect for others and tolerance for differences, specially addressed to the youth.

iv. Include in education programmes the concept that teaching should contribute to integration, cooperation and peace.

v. Implement cultural and educational programmes which give priority to gender issues, with a view to ensuring equal opportunities for men and women in education, work, political participation, decision-making as well as to develop their creativity.

vi. Adopt and implement education policies addressed to the understanding of culture in its widest sense. Broader dimensions of culture and creativity will pave the way to cultural development for different human groups in all age ranges.

vii. Develop cultural and educational programmes which include and foster oral traditions, where the elderly can actively participate by sharing their knowledge and memories with younger generations.

viii. Encourage Member Countries to exchange teachers and specialists, particularly in the field of cultural management and formal or informal education for people of all ages.

ix. Promote efforts to organize scholarships and internships on cultural programs amongst NAM countries.

III. Communications and Globalization

7. While stressing the importance of communications to encourage the acknowledgement of the cultural diversity of peoples, the Ministers agreed to recommend that their governments adopt and implement policies to:

i. Guarantee all citizens democratic access to and participation in information and the media.

ii. Resort to the maximum use of the media to inform the international community about the cultural plurality of NAM Countries.

iii. Encourage the media to take a leading role in disseminating information that promotes the understanding of cultural diversity.

iv. Launch information campaigns that promote awareness of cultural diversity.

v. Strengthen cooperation with the Non-Aligned News Agency Pool (NANAP) and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries (BONAC), and accelerate the process of setting up the International Information Centers of Non-Aligned Countries (IINC), as well as take advantage of this NAM information entities to disseminate understanding about the cultural and creative diversity of Member Countries.

vi. Participate in NAM cultural events like Film Festivals and Contemporary Art Exhibitions, as the ones successfully organized by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Indonesia, respectively, as well as other pertinent cultural activities.

IV. Planning and Cultural Development

8. Considering that the top priority of developing countries is the eradication of poverty, and stressing the important role of a culture sensitive process of development, the Ministers recommended that their Member States:

i. Include cultural matters in their development plans and programs, recognizing the cultural dimension of development and cultural rights as essential concepts.

ii. Adopt appropriate actions to achieve economic and social development in a way that preserves cultural heritage and cultural values.

iii. Encourage the introduction of legislation, where necessary, aimed at ensuring the respect for cultural rights.

iv. Conduct regular evaluations on the impact of culture on national development plans.

v. Foster artistic expression in all its forms, as well as other symbolic expressions, as a means of communication, exchange and participation, and as a free and prime expression of thought that builds peaceful coexistence.

vi. In this sense, recall that cultural policies should take into account both the creators and promoters of culture, while granting special treatment to those with disabilities, the elderly, children and youth.

vii. Create an enabling environment for women to play a prominent role in preserving and promoting cultural values and traditions, as well as in the economic, social and political decision-making processes.

viii. Design and implement programs to prevent and combat illicit use, production, trafficking and distribution of drugs, as they have a retrogressive effect on cultural cohesiveness.

9. The Ministers emphasized the role of cultural tourism as a vehicle of development and as a means of promoting awareness of cultural diversity. To that effect, they welcomed the initiative of Morocco, submitted to UNESCO, to expand the "Al Andalus Route" programme with a view to involve the

Maghreb Arab countries, on one hand, and Latin America and the Caribbean, on the other, in appraising and reviving the universal cultural heritage of Al-Andalus.

10. The Ministers emphasized that South-South cooperation on culture and related issues, including the impacts of globalization on culture, should be based on the conclusions of the Medellín Ministerial Meeting. In this connection, the Ministers welcomed the work initiated by the South Centre on globalization and its impact on the countries of the South. Such studies should devote appropriate attention to the cultural dimensions of globalization. The Non Aligned Movement can profit from such studies, and should welcome any working documents, including recommendations by the South Centre, in order to follow up actions on the subject of culture and globalization.

11. The Ministers emphasized the need to facilitate access to communication and information technology, in order to promote regional and local cultural products, which may be broadcast and transmitted via horizontal networks and channels, and thus offsetting the stereotyped and incorrect perspectives about the cultures and values of NAM Countries.

V. Institutional and Related Aspects

12. The Ministers noted with appreciation the proposal submitted by Egypt to establish a Cultural Centre for NAM in Cairo, to promote cultural cooperation and NAM cultural products. The Centre is proposed to include a large library, a data base, exhibits of NAM plastic arts, and folk arts. It would also facilitate periodical exchanges of artists and writers in NAM cultural festivals. Egypt will provide the suitable premises, equipment and manpower. Egypt will circulate the project proposal for the establishment of the Centre to the Member States for comments and recommendations.

13. The Ministers also noted with appreciation the proposal submitted by Colombia to establish in Medellín a NAM Research Centre on Culture. Colombia will provide human and logistic support for the project. The proposal will be circulated to Member States for comments and recommendations.

14. The Ministers welcomed the proposal made by Colombia to hold a Meeting of Children and Youth from Non-Aligned Countries on the issue of

cultural policies on children and youth, in 1999. Colombia will convene a preparatory meeting for such purpose, in 1998.

15. The Ministers agreed that governments should work together to secure both financial resources and technical assistance, from Member Countries and international institutions, for the accomplishment of the recommendations contained in this Plan of Action.